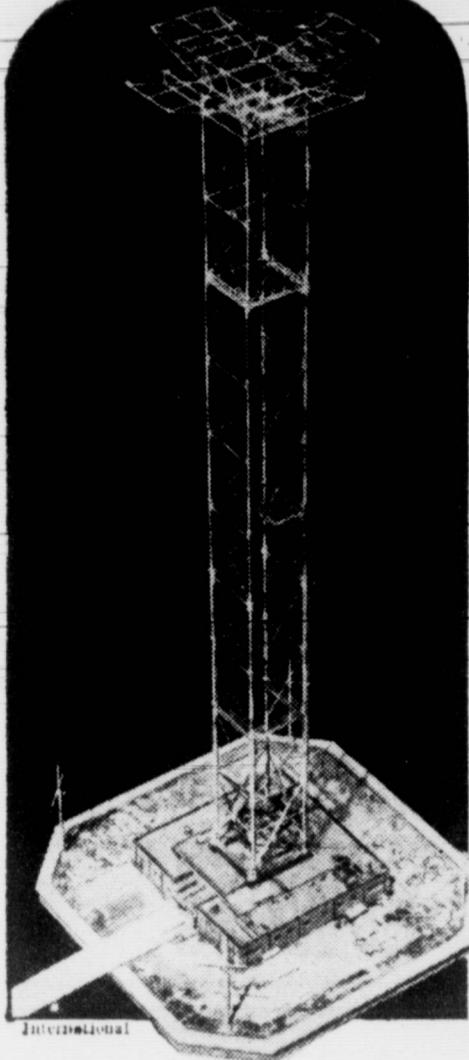


PRODIGAL PROPHET



By W. D. CROW
Noted Architect and Associate
of Famed Inventor
Nikola Tesla

JULES VERNE won deserved fame for his fictional forecasts of submarines, airships and a host of other mechanical devices that enabled his heroes to conquer danger, hardship and adversity and still come out on top.

Few people know that through the recent death of Nikola Tesla—the man who harnessed Niagara Falls for its electrical power—the world lost a real-life character who dreamed up things as fantastic as those of Verne; and made them come true.

New York's Radio City is a wonder of America today, but how many people know that back in 1902 there was another Radio City at Shoreham, Long Island—the world's first broadcasting station and transmitting tower? I had the honor to construct that tower for Nikola Tesla and there began a life-long association with this strange electrical genius.

Tesla was the forerunner of Marconi in wireless transmission and the rival of, and the victor over, the great Thomas Edison in perfecting the finally-accepted methods by which electric power is carried over long distances. And, unique among all the world's scientists, Tesla is the only man who refused the Nobel

Nikola Tesla Predicted Everything From Neon Lights to Death Rays and Battled .800 Inventing Them



Keystone Photo

Long Before Marconi, Tesla Had Erected This World's First Transmitting Tower at Shoreham, L. I., Infant Fore-runner of the Modern Giant 50,000-Watter (Left, Above).

Prize, highest scientific honor on earth.

This blunt refusal came in 1916 when Tesla was asked to share the Nobel award of that year with the famous Edison, himself. Whatever the world may have thought about it, Tesla's reasoning was clear on two counts.

1. Edison was Tesla's bitter enemy and had vehemently attacked

As Far Back as 1891 Tesla Made the First Electronic Tube; by 1890 He Had Made Global Wireless Power Transmission Possible.

the alternating current theories by which Tesla achieved long distance power transmission, and

2. Marconi had already received a prior Nobel award for "inventing" the wireless, which Tesla had described in detail years before him.

With a perhaps justifiable touch of the prima donna in his make-up

Tesla saw no reason to play second fiddle to either Marconi or Edison when it came to achievement.

For, of all his startling predictions made through the years, the records indicate that eight of every ten came true. This, incidentally, is emphasized in the recently published biography of Tesla

"Prodigal Genius" by John J. O'Neill.

In checking Tesla's accomplishments, I find that he had a lifetime batting average—to use the baseball simile—of .800.

One of Tesla's earliest forecasts was made as a youth in his native Yugoslavia when he predicted he would harness the power of Niagara Falls by mastering the then-new theory of alternating current, and

Toward the last, Tesla was dickering with the British for the rights to his wireless "Death Ray." Did its secret die with him?

thus make it serve the human race better.

When he came to America as a young man he began literally at the bottom as a ditch-digger.

But soon, through the decade of the 1880s, Tesla's genius blossomed with a flood of important patents. The "home run" of his scientific ability was the polyphase system of alternating currents which harnessed the great energy at Niagara and paid off to the tune of a million dollars from George Westinghouse.

Back in 1891 Tesla made the first electronic tube—as it would be called now—and predicted its use in communications. In 1893 he promised world-wide wireless communications and plans for modern radio.

By 1900 Tesla leaped onward from mere world-wide radio to global wireless power transmission so that electric lamps could be lighted anywhere merely by sticking a tuned rod into the ground.

At the turn of the century, too, Tesla had wartime radar working in his laboratory. His other inventions would include: neon and fluorescent lighting; the disintegration of matter with electrified particles as in modern atom-smashers and, finally, the point electron microscope.

Never one to share his secrets Tesla may have taken his greatest discovery to his grave last year.

Just before the start of World War II Tesla dickered with Winston Churchill for his wireless power system projected in the form of a "death ray." So, ships and airplanes, but he forecast its value as a "death" ray also.

How Tesla did it, or planned to do it, may never be revealed but England—indeed the whole peace-loving world—could certainly use such a device against V-bombs.